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# THE GALLERY

HOME DECORATION AND FURNITURE.

V.

THE temptation to over-decorate is so great that we are apt to try our hands on such movable articles of furniture as tables and chairs, forgetting that the value of decoration depends as much upon contrast with simple surfaces as upon studied design and execution in the decoration itself. If a person of modest means, for instance, possesses a beautiful table, he should not destroy the effect of it by strewing it with works of art, so that we lose sight of the table itself, and see only the objects placed upon it.

It is not desirable to convert a family gathering place into a studio. Delightful as is the picturesque irregularity of the studio to the person of artistic proclivities, to the average man or woman it is simply irritating. Bits of quaint carving, subtle effects of drapery, a striking bit of color, old rugs, with their mellow tones, a faded strip of tapestry, all of which may count for so much in making a room attractive to an artist, to others appear only as so many discomforts, offensive by their unconventionality. In the house of the average man—and we all belong to that large class, except, of course, the geniuses—it is best to avoid an artistic jumble of this sort. Instead, there should be a pervading sense of home life, and that will confer a charm on any room. Such an effect is best obtained by allowing one's belong-

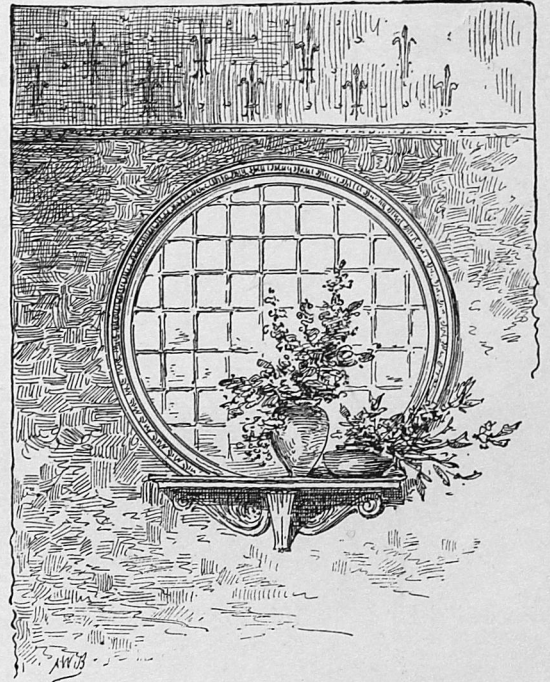
ings to accumulate slowly and because they are desired. One should not attempt to finish up the work of decorating a new house entire, before moving into it, and before finding out what is wanted for particular corners and spaces. Wait a little after the essentials are in position, and then select the little things as you see places for them.

It is a comparatively easy matter to get picturesque effects in a new house, as recessed windows, cozy corners, decorative doorways and the like can be thought of even before the foundations for the walls are laid.

In attiring a house that has been sometime built, it is another question, and a more difficult one. A hopeless feeling often follows the first glance at its ugliness. Probably the mantelpieces, which may be quite out of date, are yet not old fashioned enough to be picturesque; the trimmings of the doors and windows are so heavy that it seems almost impossible to do anything but tear them down. The plaster cornices are too coarse in design, and the ceilings are overloaded with stucco "ornaments." In short, the whole house has those distinctive "old-fashioned" features one specially strives to avoid in the construction of a modern dwelling. Much can, however, be done to alter and relieve such a room of its ugliness, without tearing any of it to pieces, and hence undergoing the expense and inconvenience of extensive alteration.

Let us here put in a plea for the employment of what may be termed *common-sense* house decoration. If we find the wood and plaster work of fifteen and twenty years ago is ugly and undesirable, shall we not be as disappointed with the merely *fashionable* decorative work of to-day twenty years hence? I think so. Are the fancies of to-day more likely to prove enduring than those of the days of our fathers? Not unless we under-

take our present decoration with the idea that it is for our own use and enjoyment, made to fit our desires, practical as well as artistic, and not a mere slavish following



DECORATIVE WINDOW.

of fashion. We admire the quaint furnishings of a century or so ago, first, because for the most part they were designed with a view to ease, comfort and elegance, and,



COZY FIREPLACE CORNER IN THE HALL.



secondly, because, after standing the test of time, they are still as easy, comfortable and elegant as they ever

Often one has a prized painting or an etching that is just suited to some such position as that shown in the larger sketch; thus placed above the mantelpiece, it dignifies the picture, gives a decoration to the chimney breast, and helps to furnish the room. Should the picture seem to be the wrong shape or size, it is a trifling matter to extend the frame until it covers the chimney with some such long panels as are sketched in. Should it be long enough to cover the width of the chimney breast and yet not high enough to show above the shelf, it may be set up with a series of small, square panels to fill up the space below.

This use of stuffs or paintings to fill panels will be advantageous in other places besides those spoken of. Take, for instance, a large panel above a door or over a window, where apparent height is desired. Select a pattern that will frame into the space well, and surround it with a light moulding—much as you would frame a picture; set this flat on the wall, and if the tones of the wall paper or the paint are in accord, the effect will be extremely good.

The effect of tapestry hangings may be obtained by buying a few yards of a finely-designed tapestry that will suit the wall space both in figure and coloring, and bordering it either with a wide band of plain color, in some such material as plush or velours, or one might even use a heavy cord of wool or silk as a bordering. This, if hung upon the side wall, will give the appearance of old tapestry, especially if the material selected has dull, dusty tones, such as are found in old Gobelins. This is by no means a difficult effect to produce, because the fabrics now manufactured are so closely copied from the

old work. Suggestions for attractive schemes for decoration of this kind could be continued almost indefinitely, but I think enough has been said to indicate what can be done at small expense by the exercise of a little ingenuity. The many readers of *The Art Amateur* who can embroider or paint may, of course, by their own work add to the grace and beauty of the mere woven fabrics with which those less talented may have to content themselves. Next month I shall have something to say about touching up the high lights with silk or by means of the paint brush, and perhaps of the more extended use of embroidery in relation to decoration of this sort.

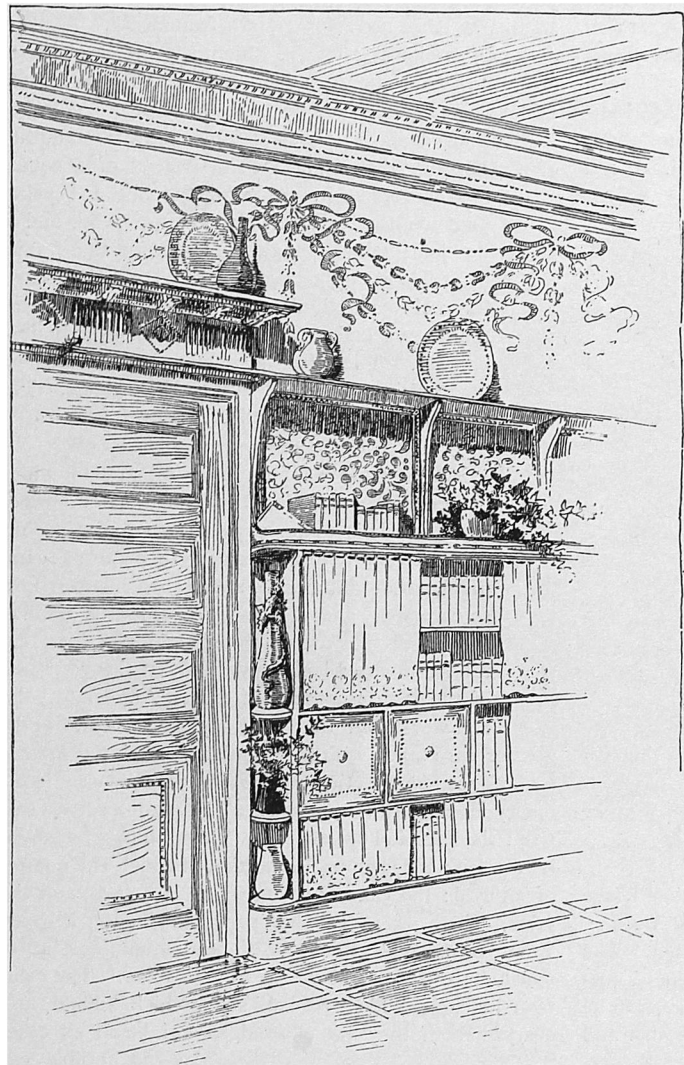
Bookcases are a fruitful source of decoration, and when one has only a groundwork of shelving to work upon, the fitting up becomes the all-important part. Soft-tinted India silk curtains, embroidered or plain, can be made to cover the major part of the shelves; or an occasional piece of Chinese embroidery upon silk or cotton cloth, or a Turkish linen cloth with the exquisite embroidery on its ends, may be made to serve as a slight protection from the dust. These curtains, pretty as they are, do not answer as a protection for books of any great value; for such volumes one must have either glass doors through which the books are visible, or solid doors whose panels will be made attractive on the outside in some way. Such panel decoration as that spoken of in the April number is ap-

plicable to a bookcase door; or, in lieu of more prominent decoration, one may stretch coarse canvas over the wood and stud it with small nails in a pattern or border, or even use a fine matting for the background.

Nearly every one who reads these articles has a more or less valuable collection of etchings, engravings or photographs, which he desires shall be properly cared for. A place for these should be found in the bookcase. Prints should never be left unprotected. It is even a mistake to lay them flat upon shelves, because it is inconvenient to handle them in that position, and, even with the best of care, the edges will become damaged in putting them out or in. Prints that are to be referred to should stand on end and be enclosed behind a solid door, or at least a door with a glass panel. Let this door be so braced that when it is opened it may serve as a rest upon which to turn over the pictures. A shelf above will be convenient if it is not wider than the depth of the case when closed, as it will serve for a rest, if one wishes to take out any particular print. A point often overlooked by the amateur collector is the protection of such a collection from dampness and the ravages of mice. Both can be guarded against by lining the cases with thin sheets of metal. This may be done easily and without in any way showing or soiling the prints, if the interior is fitted with thin pieces of wood covering the metal beneath. I do not wish to be understood as saying that all cases to hold prints must of necessity be metal lined; but for a valuable collection it is certainly worth while taking such a precaution. ARCHITECT.

#### CRADLES AND ROCKING.

THE practice of rocking seems to be almost as universal as the use of cradles, though modern intelligence seems to be inclined to abandon it. Till the past few years no American mother would ever have thought of adopting a cradle without rockers, and pretty much the same may be said of mothers all over the world. Almost all forms of the thing, remarks a writer in *The London Standard*, are designed either for swinging from a point of suspension or oscillating on rockers. Swedish cradles are often designed to give a double motion. They are suspended from the end of a flexible pole projecting from the wall of the room, or they hang from a strong spiral spring. Thus the infant may be swung to and fro or jog up and down. Probably baby Swedes like it, but



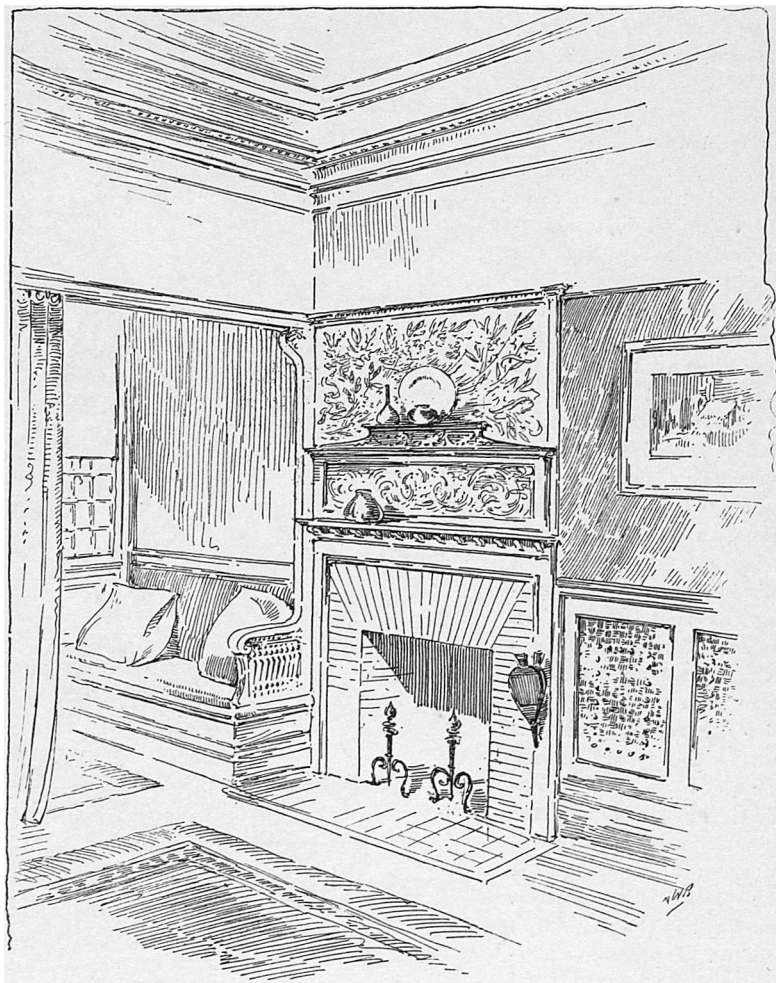
DECORATIVE BOOKSHELVES.

were. One must make an intelligent distinction, however, between that which is old fashioned and desirable and that which, although "old fashioned," is not quaint enough to be beautiful.

But, to return, the problem of how to decorate a room or a series of rooms without overdoing the decoration brings us to a point so often reached with all artistic work—namely, the money limit. It is, of course, easy to expend a large sum of money upon decoration, and still have a dignified, quiet and simple effect. But the other side of the question—how to obtain an attractive effect with a small outlay—presents more difficulty, and perhaps on that very account the solution is more worthy of effort.

The only artisan that an artistic man needs to help him in such an undertaking is a carpenter. If you cannot get a good one, do without him, as the bungling attempts of a poor workman will injure your scheme, if they do not ruin it altogether. A first-class carpenter can make shelving and cut the outlines to suit your taste, so that your corner cupboard, for instance, will be unlike that of every one else. Such a man can put together the foundation for your over-mantels, the shelves above the doors, and the various little bits that give a beginning upon which to carry out your idea of decoration.

Speaking of over-mantels suggests a variety of pretty schemes wherewith to make a chimney-piece attractive. There is a vast choice of stuffs both in woollen and cotton goods that are excellent both in design and coloring, and that have the additional attraction of being quite inexpensive if purchased even in small quantities. The illustrations offer one or two suggestions for the use of such material. The over-mantel in one is covered with a heavy tapestry that is stretched upon a large frame, the top being finished with a narrow shelf. The shelf below might be as well set against the tapestry as made part of the wooden mantelpiece, and one could thus avoid the use of the carved panel shown in the sketch. In another sketch is shown the same kind of material employed as a background between the upper shelf of some low bookcases and a narrow shelf for bric-à-brac. These narrow shelves are extremely useful, and are always attractive when filled with a goodly array of picturesque articles, well arranged.



ALCOVE, AND OVER-MANTEL TREATMENT.

there are a good many adults in whom either motion continued for five minutes would engender a horrible